



BOB RILEY  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF ALABAMA  
**DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH  
AND MENTAL RETARDATION**  
RSA UNION BUILDING  
100 N. UNION STREET  
POST OFFICE BOX 301410  
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130-1410



JOHN M. HOUSTON  
COMMISSIONER

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

October 3, 2008

*Contact: Office of Public Relations*  
334.242.3417

**MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS WEEK**

*Alabama Department of Mental Health & Mental Retardation urges all to learn the facts about mental illness.*

MONTGOMERY – In 1990, Congress established Mental Illness Awareness Week, held annually during the first week of October. Sponsored by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), the theme of this year's Mental Illness Awareness Week observed October 5-11, is "Building Community, Taking Action." The theme recognizes that real recovery from a mental illness requires community action, understanding and teamwork.

Mental illnesses are medical illnesses that can profoundly disrupt a person's thinking, feeling, mood and ability to relate to others. Mental illnesses include such illnesses as bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, major depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety disorders including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, among other severe and persistent illnesses.

One in four adults – approximately 57.7 million Americans – experience a mental health disorder in any given year. Yet the stigma associated with mental illness keeps some from getting help when they need it. Mental illnesses can affect persons of any age, race, religion or socioeconomic status. They are not the result of personal weakness, lack of character or poor upbringing. They also can be treated, and most people with mental illnesses can lead productive, fulfilling lives. In Alabama, more than 98% of people with mental illnesses are experiencing recovery and living in the community. The Alabama Department of Mental Health & Mental Retardation serves more than 100,000 citizens with a mental illness each year.

These groups, along with the Alabama Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation, and many other groups and individuals around the country encourage everyone to reflect on the hope and real possibility of reclaimed lives in communities across the country. DMH/MR Commissioner John Houston said, "Knowing and understanding the facts can help people with symptoms of mental illness seek treatment, as well as help alleviate the stigma attached with having a mental illness."

**RESOURCES**

For more information on NAMI and Mental Illness Awareness Week, visit [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org).

Information on mental illness services in the state of Alabama can be obtained by contacting the DMH/MR Mental Illness Division at (334)242-3642 or by visiting us online at [www.mh.alabama.gov](http://www.mh.alabama.gov).

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